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Perceptions of bullying in schools: Do parents and their children differ in perspective?

Abstract

The objective of this study was to examine factors related to parent and child perceptions of bullying in schools. Data were collected from 30 parent-child dyads from 3 elementary and middle schools in the Northwest. No significant group differences were found in the report of the frequency of bullying, although parents underestimated their child's experience of victimization. There were no bullies identified in this study. No significant differences were found in the reported sense of well-being among children whose parents were accurate and children whose parents were inaccurate about bullying. Parents in this study were most accurate in identifying their child's experience of verbal bullying. These findings are discussed with regard to the factors associated with parental awareness of bullying.

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PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING IN SCHOOLS: DO PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN
DIFFER IN PERSPECTIVE?

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY

PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

HILLSBORO, OREGON

BY

COLLEEN M. DOLAN

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DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING

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PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING

Abstract

The objective of this study was to examine factors related to parent and child perceptions of bullying in schools. Data were collected from 30 parent-child dyads from 3 elementary and middle schools in the Northwest. No significant group differences were found in the report of the frequency of bullying, although parents underestimated their child's experience of victimization. There were no bullies identified in this study. No significant differences were found in the reported sense of well-being among children whose parents were accurate and children whose parents were inaccurate about bullying. Parents in this study were most accurate in identifying their child's experience of verbal bullying. These findings are discussed with regard to the factors associated with parental awareness of bullying.

Keywords: bullying, victimization, parental perceptions, child well-being

PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING

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Perceptions of Bullying in Schools: Do Parents and their Children Differ in Perspective?

Schools are an important context for children in which they develop, play, learn, and socialize. The majority of learning in schools is designed to be academically oriented, but social learning is also very important in youth development. The social phenomena of bullying and victimization have garnered attention in recent media (Aradillas, Levy, & Bailey, 2011; Bowen, 2011; Hoag, 2011; Hu, 2011; Lopez, 2012). Further, several studies have examined the factors and long-term outcomes associated with bullying (including, but not limited to, Berlan, Corliss, Field, Goodman, & Austin, 2010; Bowllan, 2011; Card & Hodges, 2008; Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Glew, Fan, Katon, & Rivara, 2008; Olweus, 1996; Perren & Hornung, 2005; Rivers & Noret, 2010; Shetgiri, Lin, & Flores, 2013; Wang, Iannotti, Luk, & Nansel, 2010). However, not much is known about parental perceptions of bullying in schools.

Over 50% of children worldwide are involved in bullying in some way (Bowes et al., 2009). Prevalence rates of bullying involvement in the United States are often reported in the range of 10-30% (Cook et al., 2010; Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Glew et al., 2008; Jenson, Dieterich, Brisson, Bender, & Powell, 2010; Shetgiri et al., 2013; Spivak, & Prothrow-Stith, 2001). One study conducted in the Midwestern United States reported victimization as high as 77% in middle and high schools (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). These rates are likely variable due to the definition of bullying and time period used in the study. Regardless, it is clear that bullying is a pervasive problem in schools. This is troubling, given that many children involved in bullying are more likely to experience several negative behavioral, emotional, and academic outcomes (Berlan et al., 2010; Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2010; Card & Hodges, 2008; Cook et al., 2010; Gladstone, Parker, & Malhi, 2006; Perren & Hornung, 2005; Rivers & Noret, 2010; Wang et al., 2010).

School and home contexts have a large influence on the course of a child's participation in the bullying process (Blumenfeld & Cooper, 2010; Card & Hodges, 2008; Olweus, 1993; Rivers, 2001). Several school-level factors, such as school size, school climate, teachers' responses, and formal interventions have been examined (Blumenfeld & Cooper, 2010; Conoley, 2008; Gregory et al., 2010; Heck, Flentje, & Cochran, 2011 ; Mishna, Newman, Daley, & Solomon; Olweus, 1993; Olweus, Limber, & Milhalic, 2002; Rivers, 2001). Currently, 46 of the 51 states in the U.S. now require schools to have an anti-bullying policy (Hopkins, Taylor, Bowen, & Wood, 2013). In the home context, parents have an important role and several parental factors, such as personality variables, beliefs, and experiences have also been studied to determine the parental influence on bullying (Bowes et al., 2009; Card & Hodges, 2008, Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008, Goodman, De Los Reyes, & Bradshaw, 2010; Haynie et al., 2009; Veenstra et al., 2005). The results of these studies indicate that parental responses do have an effect on children's outcomes (Bilsky et al., 2013; Goodman et al., 2010; Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Duong, 2011). Thus, it is clear that parents and schools can have an influence on a child's experience of bullying and have an important role in this process.

Although we know that parental characteristics and responses influence their child's bullying involvement, research is lacking on whether or not parents can accurately identify their child's role in bullying. Therefore, the current study examined the relationship between parents' perception of their child's role in bullying in school and the child's self-report of their own bullying status. Prior to describing the study in detail, the literature regarding long-term outcomes, factors associated with participation in bullying, and responses to bullying will be reviewed. First, I will review how bullying is defined and how children are categorized by their

participation in bullying. Then I will discuss the long-term outcomes and factors associated with each category. Finally, the important role that schools and parents play in the bullying process is discussed.

Bullying Defined

Bullying is not a new developmental or societal concern. In fact, literature dating back to the 1800s indicated that children engaged in peer victimization (as described in Card & Hodges, 2008). However, more modern research on bullying did not begin until researchers in Norway and Sweden took interest in the late 1970s and 1980s (Card & Hodges, 2008). Researcher Daniel Olweus (1972) first defined bullying in his research, but bullying in schools still did not receive much attention until 1982 when three teens committed suicide as a result of being victimized in school (Olweus, 1993). Researchers in the United States conducted a few studies on bullying in the 1980s and 1990s (Olweus, 1996). However, the topic was not heavily studied in the U.S. until several school shootings and teen suicides spurred more interest in bullying and peer victimization, given that many of the perpetrators and suicide victims were found to be victims of bullying (Jenson, Dieterich, Brisson, Bender, & Powell, 2010).

The most prevalent definition of bullying includes three elements: intent to harm, negative actions repeated over time, and an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim (Berlan et al., 2010; Cook et al., 2010; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Olweus, 1996; Pace, Lymn, & Glass, 2001). The imbalance of power may be a physical or psychological advantage of a person or group of people over the victim (Blumenfeld & Cooper, 2010). It is important to note that in much of the research, the term *bullying* is used interchangeably with the term *peer victimization*. These terms are used synonymously in this paper as well.

Types of bullying. Categories or “types” of bullying are also important to become familiar with in order to understand the research in this area. Bullying is categorized in several ways. One distinction is whether the behavior is direct or indirect (i.e., overt or covert). Direct or overt behaviors include physical fighting and verbal taunts that are delivered directly to the victim. Indirect or covert behaviors include those that involve third parties (e.g., rumor spreading; Espelage & Swearer, 2003). In indirect bullying, the aggressor or aggressors are not always identified (Hunt, Peters, & Rapee, 2012). Bullying may further be categorized into type of aggression that occurs, such as physical (e.g., hitting), verbal (e.g., name-calling), relational (e.g., social exclusion), or cyber (e.g., online harassment; Card & Hodges, 2008; Wade & Beran, 2011). Relational aggression is a new term in the research on peer victimization, defined as the use of relationships to harm others (i.e., damaging self-esteem and social status; Fitzpatrick & Bussey, 2011). Some researchers consider it to be a subset of verbal aggression. However, threat of physical force could also be used to damage relationships (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). More research is needed on the topic of relational aggression; however, a thorough review is beyond the scope of this study. Another way to categorize bullying is whether it is instrumental (i.e., proactive) or reactive. Instrumental bullying is aimed at obtaining a reward (i.e., social or material). Reactive bullying is considered an angry response to provocation (Card & Hodges, 2008). Researchers consider the majority of bullying to be proactive (i.e., without provocation; Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

There may be gender differences in the types of aggression in which boys and girls participate. Studies demonstrate that boys are more likely to use physical aggression (such as hitting), whereas girls are more likely to use relational aggression (such as gossiping; Fitzpatrick & Bussey, 2011; Olweus, 1996; Veenstra et al., 2005). However, both boys and girls are likely

to engage in name-calling and social exclusion (Veenstra et al., 2005). Researchers disagree regarding whether or not boys are more likely to commit direct forms of bullying and girls are more likely to use indirect methods. Olweus (1996) and Veenstra et al. (2005) reported that there are gender differences in direct and indirect behaviors, but there are suggestions in other literature that this is not the case (Fitzpatrick & Bussey, 2011). Fitzpatrick and Bussey (2011) reported that more recent research has not found any differences between boys' and girls' indirect behaviors. While some earlier studies have found gender differences, norms for gender behavior may be changing over time.

Roles in bullying. Researchers have identified four groups of children who participate in the victimization process: *bullies*, *victims*, *bully-victims*, and *bystanders*. Bullies are the aggressors in the bullying process. Victims are students who are bullied. Bully-victims are students who are both an aggressor and a victim. Bystanders are those who witness bullying but to not actively take part in the process (Olweus, 1993). Several different cutoffs have been used in the literature to determine the child's status in one of the four groups. Glew, Fan, Katon, & Rivara (2008) defined *bullies* as children who reported that they bullied others at least twice a month. They defined *victims* as children who indicated that they were always, often, or sometimes bullied. Children who fit in both categories were considered *bully-victims*. Rivers and Noret (2010) determined that all children who do not fit the criteria for victims took on the role of *bystander*. These authors described bystanders as either active or passive, with active bystanders providing either overt approval or challenge and passive bystanders staying silent or telling a teacher. It is important to note, however, that the bystander category is difficult to define and is often a category that includes all students who do not fit in any of the other three categories and that there are several subgroups within the bystander category. Subgroups of the

bystander category will be discussed in more detail in a later section. Regardless, the four categories above represent an important distinction in the part that each child plays in the bullying process. The research highlights the differential academic, social, and emotional outcomes for each group, suggesting that each category is truly distinct.

Negative Outcomes of Bullying

Many researchers have indicated that bullying is associated with negative outcomes for all of the people involved in the process (Cook et al., 2010; Glazier, 2008, Berlan et al., 2010; Bowllan, 2011; Rivers & Noret, 2010). The research on negative outcomes is often separated into research on each of the categories of involvement in bullying (bully, victim, bully-victim, and bystander). Researchers have found differential outcomes for each category with some overlap (Cook et al., 2010; Glew, Fan, Katon, & Rivara et al., 2008; Lovegrove, Henry, & Slater, 2011). The research on each category is presented below.

Negative outcomes associated with being a bully. Research on the negative outcomes for the individual who commits bullying is abundant. Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, and Sadek (2010) reported that being a bully is associated with later psychiatric problems, difficulties in romantic relationships, and substance abuse. Bullies are also more likely to report having a lower quality of life (Berlan et al., 2010). Bullies also appear to be more likely to become criminals. Olweus (1996) reported that 60% of children who were labeled as bullies had at least one criminal conviction before they reached the age of 24 years old. Spivak and Prothrow-Stith (2001) reported that former bullies in one study had a 4-fold increase in criminal actions before the age of 25. These authors also indicated that the majority of participants in the study had at least one conviction and that over one-third of the sample had several convictions. A few theorists have postulated about reasons for this negative trajectory for bullies. Perren and

Hornung (2005) hypothesized that bullying is an early stage of a developmental sequence that may lead to delinquency. It is possible that this delinquency is a learned pattern. Haynie et al. (2001) concluded that in general, “bullying might allow children to achieve their immediate goals without learning socially acceptable ways to negotiate with others, resulting in persistent maladaptive patterns” (p. 31). These negative patterns are potentially the reason why bullies have such negative outcomes.

Negative outcomes associated with being a victim. Research on the victims of bullying indicates that victimization is associated with poor academic, emotional, and behavioral outcomes. Research indicates that being a victim predicts academic adjustment, a lack of enjoyment of school, the perception that school is unsafe, school truancy, and low achievement (Card & Hodges, 2008; Swearer, Espelage, Valliancourt, & Hymel, 2010). Cook et al. (2010) reported that victims experience several long-term negative outcomes including loneliness, low self-esteem, depression, and suicidal ideation. These findings were echoed by several other researchers (Bond et al., 2001; Bowllan, 2011; Swearer et al., 2010). Effects may vary by gender and racial characteristics; however, there is not enough literature in this area to establish firm conclusions. For example, Graham and Juvonen (2002) reported that in their study, African American students who were bullied reported that they were lonelier and had lower self-esteem than children of other races who were bullied. These authors suggested that cultural norms may affect the child’s response to victimization.

Several other emotional outcomes for victims of bullying have been documented. Glazier (2008) reported that adults who were bullied as children also have higher rates of anxiety than adults who were not previously bullied. Gladstone, Parker, and Malhi (2006) further clarified this link between childhood victimization and adult anxiety by reporting that

“independent of other childhood risk factors, exposure to bullying was especially predictive of subjects’ higher level of general state anxiety and the tendency to express anxious arousal externally when under stress” (p. 201). These studies demonstrate a wide range of negative emotional and behavioral outcomes that are associated with being a victim.

There may also be a biological link between victimization and negative outcomes. It is possible that genetic factors moderate the risk of developing negative outcomes as a result of bullying. Sugden et al. (2010) reported that they have identified a serotonin transporter gene that moderates the relationship between childhood victimization and the development of emotional problems. The gene is associated with how people learn to fear new stimuli and how the stress hormone cortisol is released in the body. More research is needed to confirm this link but support exists for a biological component in the development of negative outcomes after bullying. Researchers have also found that victimization is related to somatic complaints and illnesses (Cook et al., 2010; Swearer et al., 2010). Wang, Iannotti, Luk, and Nansel (2010) found that not only was victimization associated with somatic complaints, it was also associated with increased risk of injury and medicine use among adolescents. Therefore, victims are at risk for medical problems in addition to the psychological and behavioral outcomes that have been identified.

Negative outcomes associated with being a bully-victim. Children in the bully-victim category (i.e., those who bully others *and* are victimized by others) appear to have the most negative outcomes. Bowes et al. (2009) found that the negative outcomes that bully-victims experience are “not merely the sum of factors associated with victims and bullies” (p.551). In fact, the negative outcomes that they experience may go beyond that of either bullies or victims alone. Cook et al. (2010) reported that being a member of this category is associated with

carrying weapons, being imprisoned, and committing violent acts as an adult, in addition to the negative psychological outcomes associated with the other categories. They also tend to have low achievement scores (Swearer et al., 2010). Finally, Espelage and Swearer (2003) reported that in a study by the United States Secret Service on school shootings, 71% of the shooters were bullied and decided to fight back. Many of these school shooters also committed suicide, providing further evidence for the link between being a bully-victim and suicidal ideation (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Swearer et al., 2010). This is an alarming statistic that deserves closer study. There is not as much research on this category of children as there is for bullies or victims alone, but it is clear that bully-victims are an at-risk group.

Negative outcomes associated with being a bystander. Negative outcomes are not just present for active participants in bullying. There is little research on the bystander group of children, but preliminary studies indicate that bystanders, like bullies, victims, and bully-victims, do experience negative outcomes. Rivers and Noret (2010) reported that bystanders who support the victim were more likely to face co-victimization in the form of peer rejection. Rivers, Poteat, Noret, and Ashurst (2009) suggested that bystanders may be at risk for poor mental health outcomes as a result of the cognitive dissonance that they experience as a result of the conflict between their own inaction and their desire to stop the bully. Given that preliminary research indicates the possibility of negative outcomes of bystanders, more research needs to be conducted on this group of children including subcategories of bystanders that might differentially predict outcomes.

Factors Associated with Bullying Involvement

Many researchers are interested in factors that increase the likelihood that a child will participate in bullying. These studies have focused on individual, school, neighborhood, and

parent/family factors associated with each of the four groups of bullying involvement (Card & Hodges, 2008; Conoley, 2008; Cook et al., 2010; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Ferguson, San Miguel, & Hartley, 2009; Glew et al., 2008; Hampel, Manhal, & Hayer, 2009; Lovegrove, Henry, & Slater, 2012). Researchers are looking to identify which children are most at risk for the negative outcomes described above. Knowledge about these factors may also help researchers develop more effective and comprehensive intervention programs (Karna et al., 2011). Information on the individual factors associated with bullying involvement is presented below.

Individual factors associated with being a bully. A number of authors have investigated emotional and behavioral factors associated with children who bully other children. Cook et al. (2010) reported that externalizing behaviors were the strongest individual predictor of being a bully. However, age was a moderating factor in this association, such that there was a stronger relationship between externalizing behaviors and bullying in childhood and a stronger relationship between internalizing behaviors and bullying in adolescence. Several other researchers also reported this association (Gladstone et al., 2006; Hampel et al., 2009; Swearer et al., 2010; Veenstra et al., 2005). In addition to acting out, bullies also tend to have more positive beliefs about aggression (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Gladstone et al., 2006; Olweus, 1996; Swearer et al., 2010; Veenstra et al., 2005). They also tend to be more sensation-seeking (i.e., have an increased need for stimulation) than their peers (Lovegrove et al., 2012).

Levels of empathy and social skills have also been examined. Cook et al. (2010) reported that having empathy and the ability to take others' perspective was negatively correlated with being a bully. That is, bullies seem to struggle with being empathetic towards others. However, studies are conflicting because research as shown that not all bullies lack empathy. The

difference was found by Kaukiainen et al. (1999), who reported that bullies who engaged in all forms of direct aggression were found to have lower levels of empathy. This relationship was not found with children who engaged in indirect aggression. There has also been debate regarding levels of social skills in bullies. Some researchers support a social skills deficit model in which bullies have trouble with social problem solving (Swearer et al., 2010). However, other studies indicate that bullies tend to have social skills such as high social intelligence (Kaukiainen et al., 1999). Thus, there is conflicting evidence and bullies may vary in terms of their level of empathy and social skills.

Certain emotions also play a part in bullying. Bullies tend to report anger as a frequent emotion (Espelage & Swearer, 2005; Lovegrove et al., 2012; Swearer et al., 2010). Espelage and Swearer (2003) reported that increases in self-reported anger predicted increases in bullying behaviors over a 6-month period. Anxiety and depression are also associated with children who victimize their peers (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Ferguson et al., 2009). In fact, Ferguson, San Miguel, and Hartley (2009) found that depression was the strongest predictor of a child being a bully. Therefore, it is clear that emotions such as anger, depression, and anxiety may make a child more likely to victimize his or her peers.

Other factors have also been examined in studies of individual factors associated with bullying. For example, bullies have been found to be physically stronger than the peers whom they target (Gladstone et al., 2006; Olweus, 1996). Race has also been examined in a few studies, with varying results. Nansel et al. (2001) reported that Hispanic youth reported bullying others more than White or Black students. In contrast, Graham and Juvonen (2002) found that African American students were most likely to be nominated as aggressive amongst their peers. However, the sample in this study involved one school in which African American and Latino

adolescents were the majority at the school and African American students were most likely to be nominated as aggressive by the Latino students in the school. Lovegrove, Henry, and Slater (2012) reported in a separate study that African American boys who perform poorly in school are more likely to bully other students than African American boys who do well in school. However, it should be noted that the results of these studies likely vary due to differences in reporting rates and the type of assessment used in the study as well as the context and racial climate of the school.

Gini (2006) conducted a study in which she asked children what reason they would give if they did bully someone. The most common response across age and gender was “they annoyed me,” followed by “to get even.” These responses suggest that it is common for the bully to believe that they are justified in their behavior. Gini suggested that bullies sought to appear less culpable, with the next most common responses being that they did it “for fun” and because “others were doing it.” These responses are an important piece of information in determining why some children decide to bully others.

Individual factors associated with being a victim. Several individual factors have been associated with victimization from peers. There is conflicting evidence regarding victims’ behaviors. For instance, Gladstone, Parker, and Malhi (2006) reported that victims tended to be inhibited, shy, submissive, and introverted. In contrast, Hampel, Manhal, and Hayer (2009) reported that externalizing symptoms were associated with being a victim. It is possible that victims may exhibit both internalizing and externalizing symptoms. Depression and anxiety are often associated with victimization, especially for girls (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Gladstone et al., 2006; Hampel et al., 2009; Olweus, 1996; Veenstra et al., 2005). Additionally, low self-esteem has also been associated with being a victim (Olweus, 1996). It appears that there could

be general emotional dys-regulation in these children that manifests in both internalizing and externalizing symptoms (Card & Hodges, 2008). It is important to note, however, that there may be a “cycle in which these factors place children at risk for victimization, and the victimization leads to further problems in these areas” (Card & Hodges, 2008, p. 454).

Several other factors have been associated with being a victim of bullying. For example, victims have found to be physically weaker than their peers (Card & Hodges, 2008; Gladstone et al., 2006). Obesity has also been associated with victimization (Swearer et al., 2010). Further, Lovegrove et al. (2012) found that males who participated in fewer school-related activities were more likely to be victimized. Social skills are another related factor that has been identified. Several researchers have reported that victims tend to have lower social skills, which may make them the target of bullies (Card & Hodges, 2008; Cook et al., 2010; Lovegrove et al., 2012; Veenstra et al., 2005). Finally, several researchers report that race may be related to victimization; however, results in this area are mixed. Nansel et al. (2001) reported that African American teens reported being bullied significantly more than White teens. In contrast, Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, and Hymel (2010) reported that African American children reported less victimization than Caucasian or Hispanic children. Further, Davidson and Demaray (2007) reported that Hispanic children were significantly less likely to be victimized than African or Caucasian children. Again, these differences in findings may be due to reporting rates and the types of assessment measures used in the study as well as the school, neighborhood, or racial context in which the study was conducted.

Special groups who are particularly at risk of victimization. It should be noted that certain groups of people are more at risk of victimization, and much of the bullying research is targeted toward these segmented groups. One such group is children and adolescents who

identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). Many studies on bullying are specifically related to the experience of LGBT students. A full examination of this specific group is beyond the scope of this study; however, the current research on the bullying of these students is reviewed here to provide a comprehensive review on bullying in schools.

There appear to be significant differences between heterosexual and homosexual youth in the amount of victimization that they experience in school (Berlan et al., 2010). Kosciw, Diaz, and Greytak (2008) reported that nearly 85% of LGBT youth reported experiencing bullying and harassment at school. Further, over 95% of LGBT students report hearing homophobic slurs on a daily basis (Khoury, 2010). The victimization was not just from other students—LGBT students consistently report that school personnel are also aggressors (Swearer et al., 2010). Over 64% of LGBT students report feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and over 40% report feeling unsafe at school because of their gender expression (Hanlon, 2009). This perception that school is unsafe may lead sexual minority students to miss more school than students who do not identify as LGBT (Friedman, Koeske, Silvestre, Korr, & Sites, 2006). These are astounding statistics that speak to the pervasiveness of victimization of LGBT students. Even students who are not gay are often bullied by being taunted with homophobic slurs. In a study of students who reported being bullied, 26% reported that they were bullied by being called “gay” (Espelage & Swearer, 2008). Thus, there appears to be an overall climate of homophobia in schools that puts LGBT youth at risk for negative outcomes.

Several negative outcomes have been reported to affect individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Research has revealed higher rates of depression for students who identify as LGBT (Birkett, 2009; Espelage et al., 2008; Heck et al., 2011; Rivers, 2004). Rivers (2004) reported that 17% of LGBT adults reported having symptoms of Post-

traumatic Stress Disorder related to their experience of being a victim in school (including intrusive recollections, ongoing distress, dreams, and flashbacks). Even more concerning are the rates of suicide attempts. The rates vary in research, but over 42% of one sample of LGBT students reported having attempted suicide as a result of victimization in school (Rivers, 2004). Researchers van Wormer and McKinney (2003) reported that 2 in 3 gay and lesbian students attempt suicide versus 1 in 10 heterosexual students. Further, sexual minority students are 2-3 times more likely to commit suicide than heterosexual students and 30% of all completed suicides are related to sexual identity in some way.

Within the sexual minority community, it appears that youth who are questioning their sexuality are even more at risk for negative outcomes than their peers who clearly identify with a specific LGBT group. Data from multiple studies demonstrates that students who are questioning their sexuality reported the most bullying, victimization, drug use, depression, suicidality, and truancy (Birkett et al., 2009; Espelage et al., 2008; Espelage & Swearer, 2008). This may be due to internalized homophobia, which is often described as feelings of worthlessness related to one's own sexual orientation as a result of negative societal messages about homosexuality. Internalized homophobia has been found to be related to difficulty with forming long-term relationships later in life (Rivers, 2004). Homophobia is widespread in schools. Rivers (2004) found that children were more upset by being called names related to sexual orientation than they were for names related to race. Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni, and Koenig (2011) echoed this finding but added that the effect was strongest among White children. Regardless, it seems likely that children get the unfortunate message at a young age that there is something wrong with being a sexual minority.

Another special group that is at risk of victimization is children who have a disability. Much less research has been done on this group of children that have a wide variety of disabilities including developmental, learning, physical, and/or psychological disabilities as compared to sexual minority youth. Little (2002) reported that up to 94% of students with disabilities reported that they have experienced victimization. In particular, students with disabilities reported experiencing more verbal abuse, social exclusion, and physical aggression than students without disabilities. Norwich and Kelly (2004) reported that when students with disabilities attend mainstream schools as opposed to specialized schools, they experience far more bullying (83% versus 42%). The authors indicated that the students were also victimized by students from other schools in their neighborhood. Not much research has been conducted on bullying for children with disabilities, but initial research indicates that children with disabilities are more at risk of being victimized than children without a disability.

Individual factors associated with being a bully-victim. A smaller subset of research has focused on the individual factors associated with being a bully-victim. Veenstra et al. (2005) and Cook et al. (2010) reported that being a bully-victim was negatively associated with social competence and self-efficacy. That is, bully-victims likely have a negative view of their social ability as well as their overall ability. They also reported that bully-victims were most likely to have comorbid internalizing and externalizing problems. In fact, Espelage and Swearer (2003) found that bully-victims are the most at-risk group for experiencing anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. Further, bully-victims tend to rate higher on measures of externalizing behaviors and depression than children who are just bullies or just victims. In one study, they were found to score higher on levels of both physical and verbal aggression than other children. They also scored lower on measures of academic ability, social acceptance, and self-worth

(Haynie et al., 2001). Bully-victims also appear to be more likely to endorse cheating if they can get away with it and bringing a gun to school (Glew et al., 2008). Given all of the negative factors associated with bully-victims, it is no surprise that teachers report bully-victims as being among the least liked children in the classroom (Haynie et al., 2001).

Individual factors associated with being a bystander. Very few studies were identified that examined factors associated with being a bystander. A lack of consensus among researchers likely explains the paucity of research on this unique group. This lack of consensus may be due to differences in sub-groups of bystanders, including those who have a reinforcing role (e.g., respond positively to victimization), an assisting role (e.g., those who join in the taunts), defending role (e.g., those who stand up for the victim), and those who are outsiders (e.g., those who avoid contact with the bullies and victims; Rivers, Poteat, Noret, & Ashurst, 2009). Each of these sub-groups may have different factors associated with group membership. The distinction of sub-groups is an important one, as Pepler and Craig (1995) found that bystanders were present during 85% of bullying, and when they objected the bullying stopped 50% of the time. The bullying continued in most cases if the bystander did not object.

In a single study on witness status, Rivers et al. (2009) found that girls reported witnessing bullying slightly more than boys. However, it is unclear why—it may be due to the fact that girls may be more attuned to victimization of others than boys, that they generally report more on self-report measures than boys, or that there were characteristics of this particular sample that led to that result. More research is needed to examine what makes a child more likely to be a bystander than any other role in the bullying process as bystanders have received the least amount of critical attention in the literature.

Factors related to the school environment. According to Brofenbrenner's (1977) social-ecological theories, we must look at the influence of the child's environment on their development. Thus, it is imperative that we examine the child's school, as many children spend 30-50 hours a week at school. Several factors related to the school environment as an influence on bullying have been investigated. Among them, school size, school climate, teachers' responses, and school interventions have received the most attention in the literature. These factors all appear to contribute to the quantity of the bullying and the negativity of the outcomes that victims experience. The details of each factor are presented below.

School size. Several researchers have examined school size as it relates to how much victimization occurs in the school (Bowes et al., 2009; Klein & Cornell, 2010; Olweus, 1996; Swearer et al., 2010). Some researchers found that more overcrowding and larger schools have higher rates of bullying (Bowes et al., 2009; Swearer et al., 2010). It is possible that the higher rates of bullying in larger schools is related to lower levels of supervision in large schools without adequate staff to manage larger class sizes (Swearer et al., 2010). However, other researchers found that there is no difference between class or school size and the rates of victimization (Klein & Cornell, 2010; Olweus, 1996). Klein and Cornell (2010) conducted a major study of 290 Virginia high schools. They found that many people perceive that larger schools have less supervision, more diversity of students, and more disorganization. They indicated that most people also believe that smaller schools are more supportive, have warmer relationships, and offer more opportunity for school involvement. This leads to the perception that larger schools have higher rates of victimization. The results of their study indicated the contrary: larger schools had a decreased rate of bullying. This decreased rate was evident across several different measures—fewer self-reports of victimization, fewer discipline reports on

bullying, and fewer reports of assaults and threats. However, the teacher's perception of disorder was higher in larger schools (Klein & Cornell, 2010). Thus, there is preliminary evidence of an inverse relationship between school size and rates of bullying such that the rates of bullying per student are not higher in larger schools even though the overall number of incidents may be higher. However, these findings must be replicated and validated, as an alternative explanation may be that less incidents of bullying come to the attention of staff in larger schools leading to underreporting of the amount of bullying in those settings. More research is needed to determine the nature of the relationship between school size and rates of victimization.

School climate. Another school-level factor that has garnered attention in the research has been termed "school climate." School climate has been defined as the social organization, relationships among students and teachers, norms, values, degree of respect and fairness, and sense of belonging in a school (Blumenfeld & Cooper, 2010; Cook et al., 2010). Blumenfeld and Cooper (2010) reported that bullying can be reduced in schools with a welcoming climate. Similarly, Espelage and Swearer (2008) reported that LGBT students have fewer negative outcomes if the school is perceived as having a welcoming climate. The teachers and administrators appear to set the tone for the whole school. For example, Espelage and Swearer (2003) reported that role modeling from the adults at schools influences the aggressive behavior of the children in school. Schools that have higher levels of conflict between students and teachers have also reported more oppositional, attention-related, and conduct problems (Kasen, Johnson, & Cohen, 1990). It appears that students benefit the most from a more authoritative style from teachers and administrators, which includes both structure and support. The structure includes clarity and fairness of rules. The support includes the perception that the students belong and can talk to teachers (Gregory et al., 2010). In their study, Gregory et al. (2010) found

that when schools had both of these elements, students engaged in fewer negative behaviors, including bullying. Similarly, Haynie et al. (2001) found that the formula for the fewest behavioral problems in schools included teacher warmth, teacher interest and involvement, firm limits, monitoring, and non-hostile consequences for negative behaviors.

Students in a school with a perceived negative climate tend to stay silent instead of reporting victimization. Card and Hodges (2008) reported that only half of elementary school students, one third of middle school students, and 15% of high school students report their victimization to teachers because they “believe such action will fail to improve, and may even worsen, their situation” (p. 455). In another study by Glew et al. (2008), only 27% of the total sample reported their victimization to someone. This may be because the adults in some schools often do not intervene and when they do take action; their efforts may not be effective in ameliorating the situation (Mishna et al., 2009). This lack of reporting and lack of faith in school personnel serves to maintain bullying behavior.

Teachers’ responses to bullying. There are several possible responses that teachers can have to witnessing bullying in school. One easy way that teachers can reduce the prevalence of bullying is to monitor the “hotspots” in schools. Most victims report being bullied in classrooms, hallways, staircases, playgrounds, and bathrooms (Blumenfeld & Cooper, 2010; Conoley, 2008; Rivers, 2001). The sheer presence of adults in these areas appears to discourage bullying. Teachers can also choose to intervene even with low-level behaviors such as name-calling. Adults who do not say anything when these behaviors occur may give the impression that these behaviors are acceptable (Conoley, 2008). However, it may not be intentional that most teachers do not intervene with verbal bullying—most adults tend to over identify physical bullying and under-identify verbal bullying (Hunt et al., 2012). In a study of teachers’

perceptions of bullying, Zerillo and Osterman (2011) found that teachers reported feeling more accountable for intervening when there were physical consequences as opposed to social or emotional consequences. The researchers also reported that a sense of accountability was positively correlated with years of teaching experience, indicating that more experienced teachers were more likely to intervene when a student is being victimized. Seeley, Tombari, Bennett, and Dunkle (2011) suggested that teachers not just intervene, but also help engage bullies in academic and extracurricular activities. More training may be necessary to help teachers feel competent enough to intervene. Card and Hodges (2008) reported that only 5% of teachers felt as if they had enough training on bullying. Given teachers' ability to affect the long-term outcomes of students, it is important that researchers continue to examine how to support teachers in their intervention efforts.

Formal school interventions. There are several strategies that schools can use to combat bullying. The most well-known school-wide bullying intervention program is the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP; Olweus et al., 2002). The OBPP works on four levels: the individual, classroom, school, and community. It was named "Best Practice" by the US Department of Justice and the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for its ability to reduce bullying in schools (Office of Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention, 2004). The program trains teachers and facilitates ongoing discussions about bullying in the school. It also supports teachers in the enforcement of classroom rules and supervision of "hotspots." The system further includes positive reinforcement for pro-social behavior (Olweus et al., 2002). Another bullying program that researchers have studied is the KiVa Antibullying Program, which was developed in Finland. The program focuses on the effect of bystanders and encourages them to take a stand against bullying. It also includes

disciplinary methods, supervision, training, rules, policies, conferences, and education for parents. The program is time-intensive (it takes one year), but has been shown to decrease bullying and victimization (Karna et al., 2011). Finally, a more recent intervention is the Positive Behavior Supports (PBIS) Intervention, which is part of a response to intervention (RTI) model. PBIS is a preventive intervention that includes principles of behavior management and education. It includes a program evaluation to track behavior change (Pugh & Chitiyo, 2012). There are many formal school interventions being used currently that provide a way to impact the rates of bullying in schools.

One way for schools to support LGBT students is to create and maintain Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs). Heck, Flentje, and Cochran (2011) reported that students at schools with GSAs reported hearing fewer homophobic slurs than students in schools without a GSA. Further, GSAs were associated with less victimization and fewer suicide attempts in lesbian, gay, and bisexual teens. It appears that GSAs contribute to the overall positivity of the school climate, which benefits all students. Some states have also implemented legal protections for LGBT students. However, not all states have adopted such a policy (Hanlon, 2009). More comprehensive legal protections are necessary to ensure the safety of all students in school.

Neighborhood and community factors associated with bullying. Far fewer researchers have examined the neighborhood and community factors that are associated with bullying behaviors. The studies that exist do point to the influence of the larger community on aggressive behavior. For example, Bowes et al. (2009) reported that increased behavioral problems were associated with disadvantaged neighborhoods. Further, Veenstra et al. (2005) reported that bystanders were more likely to come from families of a higher socio-economic status than bullies, victims, or bully-victims. Bowes et al. (2009) also reported that having

problems with neighbors was associated with bully-victims and not the other groups. Similarly, Espelage, Bosworth, and Simon (2000) reported that having concerns about the safety of one's neighborhood was associated with being a bully. It is possible that having negative interactions with neighbors, models aggressive behaviors that children then inflict on their peers at school (Bowes et al., 2009). It appears that victims are also victimized in their neighborhoods, suggesting that children maintain their status both inside and outside of school (Card & Hodges, 2008). This may be because of the children's' associated peer group and the fact that neighborhoods are geographically linked to the child's local public school. Swearer et al. (2010) supported what has been called the *homophily hypothesis*, reporting that aggressive children tend to affiliate with other aggressive children. They hypothesized that these behaviors are reinforced to the point that they become normative in the group. This hypothesis is supported by other research studies that indicate that one of the strongest predictors of delinquency is having delinquent peers (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Ferguson et al., 2009; Perren & Hornung, 2005). Although there is some evidence implicating the role of the larger community in bullying and victimization, more research needs to be done to confirm these associations.

Parental factors associated with bullying. Several parental and family factors have been identified in the research on bullying. Many researchers have examined the role of parenting in the development of aggressive behaviors. One of the most common findings is that children who witness parental conflict and domestic violence are more likely to bully peers in school (Bibou-Nakou, Tsiantis, Assimopoulos, & Chatzilambou, 2013; Bowes et al., 2009; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Ferguson et al., 2009; Olweus, 1996). In general, these parents may have more positive attitudes regarding aggression and a focus on power in the family (Feder, Levant, & Dean, 2007; Perren & Hornung, 2005). Bullies' mothers have been found across

some studies to be low in warmth, high in rejection, and depressed or to have decreased emotional health (Bowes et al., 2009; Olweus, 1996; Perren & Hornung, 2005; Shetgiri, Lin, & Flores, 2013). They may also model poor problem solving strategies (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). The families of bullies are often characterized as having decreased supervision or increased permissiveness (Bibou-Nakou et al., 2013; Espelage and Swearer, 2003; Olweus, 1996; Perren & Hornung, 2005) and hostile disciplinary strategies (Espelage and Swearer 2003; Perren & Hornung, 2005). Further, parental anger toward their child is associated with increased bullying. However, when parents believe that they communicate with their children well or very well, their child is less likely to be a bully (Shetgiri et al., 2013). Overall, the parents of bullies appear to have an influence on the aggressive behavior of their children.

Three common factors are often associated with the parents of victims. One of the most commonly reported family factors of victims are that victims are more likely to have an insecure attachment to their parents (Card & Hodges, 2008; Gladstone et al., 2006; Marini, Dane, Bosacki, & YLC-CURA, 2006; Perren & Hornung, 2005). Second, some researchers report that the parents of victims are more likely to be over-controlling or overprotective (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Gladstone et al., 2006; Perren & Hornung, 2005). Third, abuse and maltreatment are often reported in families of victims (Bowes et al., 2009; Card & Hodges, 2008; Gladstone et al., 2006; Lereya, Samara, & Wolke, 2013). Conversely, Lereya et al. (2013) found that good communication, warmth and affection, and parental supervision were protective factors against victimization. Other factors have been examined but produced inconsistent results. For example, Card and Hodges (2008) reported that the presence of a father in the home is inconsistently associated with the child's victimization. More research is needed to determine the relationship between parental factors and victimization.

Far fewer studies have been conducted on the parental and family factors associated with bully-victims. However, like parents of bullies, parents of bully-victims have been associated with decreased parental warmth and increased child rejection (Bowes et al., 2009; Perren & Hornung, 2005). Bowes et al. (2009) also found that mothers of bully-victims tended to take part in fewer activities with their children. Finally, Perren and Hornung (2005) reported that parents of bully-victims had higher levels of aggression than parents of the other groups. It is possible that the parents of bully-victims share some of the characteristics associated with the parents of the other groups, but more research is needed to determine these associations. This is especially true given research on child factors associated with bully-victims indicates that this is a group that is especially at risk, above and beyond the combination of factors from the other two groups.

It is important to note that not all researchers support the association between parenting factors and involvement in bullying. Veenstra et al. (2005) conducted a multivariate analysis on adolescents and found that parenting practices were not strongly associated with bullying. They noted that earlier univariate analyses did implicate the role of parenting on bullying, but that their study found only a weak association. They also indicated that parenting likely has a stronger impact on the aggressive behaviors of younger children but not on the behavior of adolescents. In a study by Haynie et al. (2001), parenting was not directly associated with the bullying behaviors of children, but instead had an indirect influence through factors such as social competency, academic functioning, and association with a peer group. These are important variables to note when considering the influence of parenting and family factors on a child's involvement in bullying.

Child and Family Responses to Bullying in Schools

The way in which children and families respond to bullying can have a large impact on the course and long term outcomes of bullying (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2011). As noted previously, some children choose not to report victimization to teachers (Card & Hodges, 2008). Some teachers do not intervene or report the bullying behavior to administrators (Conoley, 2008). This problem has led to increased interest in what children and their parents do about bullying when the school has not intervened.

Children's responses to bullying. Not many studies have been conducted on children's responses to bullying. Further, within this small literature, some of the major studies on this topic are conflicting. Elledge et al. (2010) reported that overall, children endorsed more pro-social responses to bullying (such as telling an adult) than coercive strategies (such as fighting back). Kochenderfer-Ladd (2004) reported that there is a direct pathway from victimization to cognitive distancing (e.g., pretending that it did not happen). In the study, she found that anger was the most common emotional response to bullying. Another study found that children who are frequently victimized are more likely to use avoidance strategies such as staying away from bullies and that avoidance strategies led to worse social and emotional outcomes for the victim. This suggests that the victim's response may have an effect on the likelihood of further victimization (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2011).

There may also be age and gender differences in how children respond to peer aggression. Kochenderfer-Ladd (2004) reported that older children and girls reported having more intense emotional reactions to peer victimization than younger children and boys. Other studies also found gender differences in typical responses. For example, Elledge et al. (2010) reported that more boys endorsed fighting back. Girls had the lowest levels of endorsement of

any strategy. The authors likened this to the concept of learned helplessness, in which girls may accept their fate of being victimized and may not have faith that anyone can help them. Elledge et al. (2010) also found that older children (children in middle school) were more likely to use counter-aggression than younger children (children in elementary school). Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2011) reported some similar results, such that younger students were more likely to tell adults and boys are more likely to use physical strategies to respond to bullying. They also found that boys were more likely to endorse avoidance than girls, but that girls do endorse seeking support and talking about their victimization.

These different strategies have been found to have a differential effect on the outcomes for victims. Hampel et al. (2009) reported that boys who used either distancing or externalizing coping strategies were at risk for higher levels of anxiety and depression. They also reported that girls who did not seek support from a friend had more social problems. This may be due to the fact that the victims feel socially isolated from bullies and neutral bystanders (Davidson & Demaray, 2007). Similarly, Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2011) reported that girls who responded with aggression were at risk for both internalizing and externalizing problems. Girls who sought support from a friend had fewer social and internalizing problems. Chronic victims who walked away were less likely to have socio-emotional problems than chronic victims who fought back. These researchers also found that students who lacked a consistent response style to bullying had higher levels of internalizing and externalizing symptoms. They hypothesized that these children were likely unable to identify an effective strategy (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2011). Thus, there appear to be differences among genders, age groups, and response styles in the long-term outcomes of their response to bullying.

Kochenderfer-Ladd (2004) also examined how children's responses to victimization affected their likelihood of being bullied again. She found that children who responded with anger, the most common emotional reaction, had a decreased probability of using effective response strategies. Anger predicted that children would use revenge as a coping strategy, which is linked to increased victimization. The author found that responding in fear or embarrassment actually led to more effective response strategies, such as seeking advice and amicable confrontation of the bully. She also reported that cognitive distancing, the most common strategy that children used in the study, predicted higher levels of further victimization and internalizing problems. Thus, although fear and embarrassment are typically seen as negative emotions, they may actually lead to the most effective coping strategies that children can use in response to peer aggression.

Parents' response to bullying. Research overwhelmingly indicates that parental support is paramount to helping children who are bullied. Beran (2008) reported that preadolescent children who were bullied at school had lower levels of academic achievement when they received lower levels of parental support. Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, and Koenig (2008) reported that stressed teens who had support from their mothers were less likely to develop the internalizing and externalizing symptoms otherwise associated with stress. They also indicated that African American males in relationships characterized by relational bullying were buffered from psychological distress when they had high levels of maternal support. Parental support may also be especially important for females. Davidson and Demaray (2007) reported that females who perceived support from their parents were less likely to report internalizing symptoms. Similarly, Stadler, Feifel, Rohrmann, Vermeiren, and Poustka (2010) found that parental support buffered females entering middle school from maladjustment. The positive

effect of parental support is reported to be as large as or larger than the negative effect of victimization (Bilsky et al., 2013). Thus, it appears that parental support, especially maternal support, is an important factor that mediates the relationship between victimization and negative outcomes.

This relationship between parental support and long-term outcomes appears to especially be true for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning students. Espelage and Swearer (2008) reported that there was a moderating effect of parental support on a wide range of outcomes for these youth. Specifically, Heck et al. (2011) indicated that parental support mediated the effect between sexual orientation, depression, and suicidal ideation in young adults. However, Poteat et al. (2011) described a more complicated relationship. They reported that parental support had the most consistent effect in the relationship between general and homophobic victimization on suicidality for heterosexual youth. That is, heterosexual teens who were bullied with both general and homophobic slurs were less likely to become suicidal if they had the support of their parents. This relationship was not as clear for LGBT youth. The researchers reported that parental support did not moderate the effect of homophobic victimization of these teens and that it only moderated the effect of general victimization of White LGBT students. Thus, parental support may be insufficient to buffer LGBT youth from homophobic victimization (Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni, & Koenig, 2011). More research is needed to determine the exact relationship between parental support of LGBT students and their long-term outcomes.

Very few studies were identified that discuss parental responses to bullying. Two studies investigated factors affecting parents' responses to their child's victimization in school. Cooper and Nickerson (2013) found that a parent's history with physical victimization made the parent more likely to be concerned about their child's experience of verbal and relational bullying. The

parents in the study reported less concern and child engagement in physical bullying than in verbal or relational bullying. Waasdorp, Bradshaw, and Duong (2011) reported that parents of minority children were less likely to report talking to their child about bullying in school. Not surprisingly, parents of younger children were more likely to intervene than parents of adolescents. The researchers found that the parent's perception of the school was an important factor on whether or not they chose to contact the school regarding their concerns. Parents who perceived a positive school climate were more likely to contact teachers or administrators. They were also significantly more likely to intervene if the bullying was classified as direct (overt threats or physical bullying). Thus, preliminary research demonstrates that parents generally intervene if they have a history of being victimized, their child is younger, they perceive the school climate as positive, and the form of bullying is direct.

Only two studies reported on the responses of parents to bullying. Waasdorp et al. (2011) indicated that of the possible responses to victimization (e.g., talking to the child, talking to the teachers or school administrators, and contacting the bully or the bully's family) the most common parent response was to talk to their child. However, Idsoe, Solli, and Cosmovici (2008) reported that parents' regulation of their child's behaviors (e.g., with whom and where the child plays) was effective in reducing the child's participation in bullying. This fits with more recent research that indicated that when parents had met their child's friends, their child was less likely to have engaged in bullying (Shetgiri et al., 2013). Thus, more research needs to focus on how parents are actually responding to bullying and victimization.

Research is lacking on whether or not parents are even aware of what part their child plays in the bullying process. With the low reporting rates discussed previously, it is possible that parents do not even know whether their child(ren) are playing a role in bullying (e.g., as a

bully, victim, bystander, etc.). This is an important factor to note, given that no intervention with the families will be effective unless parents have an awareness of the problem. Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005) reported that the parents in their study did not talk to bullies about their behavior because they were not even aware that the child was a bully. Given that adults over-identify physical bullying and under-identify other types of bullying, coupled with the low reporting rates, it is likely that parents are not aware of much of the victimization that happens at school (Glew et al., 2008).

The small subset of bullying research that focuses on parental perceptions of bullying indicates that parents are not very aware of bullying in school. Goodman, De Los Reyes, and Bradshaw (2010) reported that parents typically report that their child has less exposure to violence than the child reports. Supporting this notion, Richters and Martinez (1993) reported in their study that only 44% of parents reported that their child had been victimized in comparison to the children's self-report of 67%. Further, Matsunaga (2009) reported that college students whose parents were aware of their bullying status report better well-being than college students whose parents were not aware of their bullying status. In a qualitative study of parents in Canada, 50% of parents surveyed were not aware that their child was a victim (Sawyer, Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2011). More research is needed on the relationship between parent and child's perceptions of bullying as well as the relationship between a child's bullying status and a parent's awareness of that bullying status.

Summary

Bullying is a prevalent problem in schools worldwide. Children in each of the four bullying roles (bully, victim, bully-victim, and bystander) are at risk for negative long-term outcomes, including social, emotional, and legal problems that affect their current and

subsequent quality of life (Cook et al., 2010; Glazier, 2008, Berlan et al., 2010; Bowllan, 2011; Rivers & Noret, 2010). Researchers have identified several factors in schools that contribute to the prevalence of bullying, including school size, school climate, teacher responses, and formal school interventions (Bowes et al., 2009; Card & Hodges, 2008; Gregory et al., 2010; Klein & Cornell, 2010; Olweus, 1996; Olweus et al., 2002; Swearer et al., 2010). Several home factors have been investigated also, including neighborhood factors, parent personality traits, parent beliefs regarding bullying and violence, and parental experiences of bullying (Bibou-Nakou et al., 2013; Bowes et al., 2009; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Ferguson et al., 2009; Perren & Hornung, 2005; Swearer et al., 2010). Based on this review of the literature, home and school systems appear to be extremely important in the development and intervention of bullying behaviors.

Additionally, the role of parents is paramount in combating the negative effects of bullying on all children. It is clear that parental support can buffer children from the negative effects of bullying (Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Espelage et al., 2008; Stadler et al., 2010). However, parents are not always aware of bullying or other social experiences affecting their children. Embarrassment, poor communication, and a lack of the child's own awareness of victimization can often lead to the parent's unawareness of bullying (Bilsky et al., 2013). Regardless, parents will not likely engage in interventions if they are not aware of a problem. It is imperative that parents have an awareness of their child's participation in bullying in order to encourage their participation in the intervention. Research is needed to further investigate parental awareness.

The Current Study

Based on the preceding literature review, there is a great need for studies that address bullying roles and parental perceptions of children's bullying status. This study is designed to add to the literature on parental perceptions of bullying in schools by taking a careful look at both child and parental views of bullying both independently and as related to one another.

One particular goal of this study is to identify the relationship between parents' and children's perceptions of bullying in schools. The data from this study will add to information regarding whether or not parents are aware of their child's participation in bullying. This information will help researchers make more effective intervention recommendations for parents and schools.

The following section describes the research questions of interest in the current study as well as the methodology for executing this research.

Furthering the research on bullying in the important area of parental perception is attempted in this study by examining the following research questions: (a) What is the relationship between parents' and children's perceptions of the frequency of bullying in schools?, (b) How accurately are parents able to classify their child(ren) in each of the bullying roles (bully, victim, bully-victim, bystander?), (c) What is the relationship between parents' ability to correctly identify their child(ren)'s bullying role and their child's self-reported well-being?, and (d) What is the relationship between the type of victimization used (e.g., physical and verbal) and parents' awareness of their child's bullying status?

Hypotheses

Based on the literature reviewed, it was hypothesized that parents and children in the study would have different perceptions of the frequency of bullying in school. Further, it was hypothesized that parents would be most accurate in identifying their child's bullying status if

the child is a victim. It was also predicted that children of parents who accurately identify the child's bullying status would report greater well-being. Finally, it was expected that parents would be better able to identify their child's bullying status in the presence of physical bullying than in the presence of verbal bullying.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were students ages 8-14 and their parents, as this is the age range during which most bullying occurs (Cook et al., 2010). The participants were parents and students from local schools where permission was granted to carry out this study. In order to address the research questions of interest in this study, the goal was to obtain data from participants in different school environments spanning elementary and middle school levels. School settings were recruited via existing connections between Pacific University faculty and local school districts.

Participants were 30 students and 30 parents from three local schools where permission was granted to complete the study. Data collection took place during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years. The schools included one private school (grades Kindergarten through 8th grade, $n=19$) and two public elementary schools ($n=7$ and $n=4$). The average age of the children in this study was 9.83 ($SD=1.68$; 12 boys, 18 girls). See Table 1 for the distribution of child participants' ages. The children identified as Biracial ($n=3$), Caucasian ($n=23$), and Hispanic/Latino ($n=4$). Most of the children in the study reported having siblings (mean number of siblings = 1.90). Of the parents who completed the survey, 4 were male and 26 were female. The parents identified as African American ($n=1$), Asian ($n=1$), Caucasian ($n=25$), and

Hispanic/Latino (n= 3). Four parents reported being single, two parents reported being divorced, and 24 reported being married.

Table 1

Age of Child Participants

Age	<i>n</i>	%
8	8	26.67
9	5	16.67
10	10	33.33
11	3	10
12	0	0
13	3	10
14	1	3.33

Permission was obtained from the Pacific University Institutional Review Board (IRB) as well as from the school district's internal IRB (if applicable) for the current research. Once participating schools were identified, participants were recruited in the method deemed most appropriate by the schools' principal. This included the principal investigator either sending survey materials home with students or recruiting participants at a school-wide event (e.g., parent-teacher conferences).

One parent and one child from each eligible family were invited to complete the Parent Questionnaire and the Child Questionnaire, respectively. Participants who received the materials at home completed the measures at home and returned them to the school. Participants recruited at a school-wide event completed measures on site. Each family was provided with the opportunity to enter into a raffle for a gift card. The child was offered a small prize in exchange for his or her participation.

The principal investigator stored the informed consent and assent documents in a secure file separate from the completed survey data on Pacific University's campus. Data were then entered into a password-protected electronic file for analysis.

Measures

The measures used in this study are described below and were selected for their ability to capture the constructs of interest (i.e., parental perceptions and the presence of bullying) and age appropriateness (i.e., for children aged 8 – 16 and their parents).

Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire. The Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (R-OBVQ; Olweus, 1996) is a 39-item self-report instrument designed for children ages 8-16 to measure exposure to various forms of bullying, how and where bullying occurs, beliefs about bullying and victimization, and various aspects of the child's social environment. A definition of bullying is first presented to the student as follows:

We say a student is bullied when another student or several other students say mean and hurtful things or make fun of him or her or call him or her mean and hurtful names, completely ignore or exclude him or her from their group of friends or leave him or her out of things on purpose, hit, kick, push, shove around, or threaten him or her, tell lies or spread false rumors about him or her or send mean notes and try to make other students dislike him or her, and do other hurtful things like that. (Solberg & Olweus, 2003; p. 246).

This definition is followed by the questions, "How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months?" and "How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?" (Solberg & Olweus, 2003, p. 243). These items are

followed by questions regarding how often different forms of bullying have occurred (Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

Solberg and Olweus (2003) recommend using a cutoff of children who have been bullied and/or victimized 2 or 3 times a month when grouping children into the categories of bully, victim, and bully-victim. The R-OBVQ is reported to have good internal consistency reliability (0.80) and construct validity. It has been found to correlate with measures of peer ratings at the 0.40-0.60 range (Olweus, 1996).

Several questions of this measure were not included in this study to focus the survey on questions applicable to the current study (e.g., questions about bullying online). The questions on bullying behaviors were of most interest to this study in order to classify children into the bullying categories. A total bullying score (range 0-61) was also derived from the classification questions in order to examine differences in bullying rates reported from children and parents.

Child Well-Being. Three questions on subjective well-being were included in the child questionnaire that was based on the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Similar to the method used by Matsunaga (2009), the scale was shortened to include questions that targeted the aspects of well-being of most interest in this study while keeping the survey at a manageable length and at the reading level of the child participants:

1. I am satisfied with my life (5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree).
2. In most ways, my life is close to ideal (5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree).
3. I am happy with the way that my life is turning out (5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree).

Parental Perceptions of Bullying. To measure parental perceptions of bullying, the researcher in this study adapted questions from the R-OBVQ to ask parents about the same concepts represented in the R-OBVQ (adaptation permission granted by Olweus via personal communication, July 2, 2012). Sample questions included, “How often has your child been bullied at school in the past couple of months?” and “How often has your child taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?”

Several questions were added to the questions adapted from the R-OBVQ. These questions included:

1. The teachers and administrators at my child(ren)’s school are approachable (5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree).
2. I would describe the climate at my child(ren)’s school as positive (5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree).
3. Is your child a bully (yes or no)? A victim? A bystander?

Demographics Questionnaire. A 5-item demographic questionnaire was given to the parent and a 6-item demographic questionnaire was given to the child that contained questions on age, gender, race/ethnicity, child’s grade, and child’s number of siblings (see Appendices A and B).

Data Analytic Procedures

Analyses included t-tests for independent samples and 2x2 sensitivity and specificity analyses in order to address the research questions guiding this study. Two t-tests for independent samples were used to determine the difference between parents’ awareness of bullying in schools and their child’s awareness of bullying in school, and to determine the difference in the children’s self-report of well-being between parents who are accurate and

parents who are inaccurate in their report of the child's bullying status. A series of 2x2 sensitivity and specificity analyses were used to examine how accurate parents are in classifying their children in each of the four bullying groups and difference in parents' accuracy of identifying their child's bullying status between the different types of bullying.

Results

Participant Data

The data from 30 students and their parents from participating schools in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years were analyzed. There were minimal missing data points that did not interfere with the analyses of this study. Thus, all participants' data were included in the analysis.

Child data. According to the ROBVQ (which uses a cutoff of 2-3 incidents a month or more to classify children into the categories of bully, victim, and bully-victim), 6 children were classified as a victim and 24 children were classified as bystanders. No children were identified as bullies or bully-victims. See Table 2 for information on the age and type of bullying experienced by victims. Of the victims, 2 reported being called names, teased, or made fun of; 3 reported being intentionally excluded, left out, or ignored; 3 reported being hit, kicked, punched, or shoved; and 1 reported having lies spread about him or her (multiple types of bullying occurred against 2 of the identified victims). Two reported not telling anyone about the bullying, 3 told their teacher, 5 told a parent or guardian, 1 told another adult, and 1 told a sibling or siblings. All children in the study were asked how often teachers or adults at the school try to put a stop to bullying (5-point Likert scale ranging from Almost Never to Almost Always). The average answer was between "sometimes" and "often."

In general, the children in this study reported being satisfied with their lives (5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree; mean= 4.40), believing that their lives are close to ideal (mean= 4.13), and being happy with the way their lives are turning out (mean= 4.33).

Table 2

Characteristics of Victims

Victim	School	Age	Gender	Type of Bullying
1	A	8	M	Physical, Relational, Verbal
2	A	9	F	Relational
3	A	10	M	Physical
4	B	8	F	Relational
5	B	10	F	Relational
6	C	8	F	Physical, Verbal

Note. Victims were assigned a number (1-6) and schools were assigned a letter (A-C) for identification.

Parent data. According to the adapted version of the ROBVQ, six parents identified their children as meeting criteria for being a victim and 24 parents identified their child as a bystander. No children were identified as bullies or bully-victims by this method (See Table 3). When asked outright (e.g., is your child a bully?), only one parent identified their child as a bully. Seven parents identified their child as a victim and five identified their child as a bystander via this method (See Tables 4 and 5). All six parents who identified their child as being a victim on the ROBVQ indicated that their child had been called names, was made fun of, or was teased in a hurtful way (verbal bullying; see Table 6). Two parents also indicated that their child had been left out, excluded or ignored. One parent indicated that lies or rumors were spread about his/her child (relational bullying; see Table 7). No parent identified his/her child as experiencing physical bullying at the level identified on the ROBVQ (2-3 times a month or more; see Table 8). The parents were also asked if they believed their child would join in

bullying a child whom he or she did not like. None of the parents believed their child would join in. Five parents responded “I don’t know.” The remainder of the parents responded from “I don’t think so” to “Definitely no.”

In general, the parents in this study reported that the teachers and administrators in their child’s school are approachable (5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree; mean= 4.17) and that the atmosphere in the child’s school is positive (mean= 3.97). The parents in the study were also asked how often teachers or adults at the school try to put a stop to bullying (5-point Likert scale ranging from Almost Never to Almost Always). Of the 25 parents that responded to the question, the average answer was “often.” The parents were also asked how often they have contacted the school regarding bullying. Three parents reported that they contacted the school once and two parents reported contacting the school several times about bullying.

Table 3

<i>True and False Positive and Negative Rates: Comparison of Parent and Child ROBVQ</i>		
Victims as identified by the ROBVQ (n= 30)		
	Not a Victim	Victim
Parent ROBVQ indicated victim	4 (13.33%)	2 (6.67%)
Parent ROBVQ indicated not a victim	20 (66.67%)	4 (13.33%)

Table 4

<i>True and False Positive and Negative Rates for Parents: Is Your Child a Victim?</i>		
Victims as identified by the ROBVQ (n= 30)		
	Not a Victim	Victim
Parent Answered “Yes”	4 (13.33%)	3 (10%)
Parent Answered “No”	20 (66.67%)	3 (10%)

Table 5

True and False Positive and Negative Rates for Parents: Is Your Child a Bully?

	Bullies as identified by the ROBVQ (n= 30)	
	Not a Bully	Bully
Parent Answered "Yes"	1 (3.33%)	0 (0%)
Parent Answered "No"	29 (96.67%)	0 (0%)

Table 6

True and False Positive and Negative Rates: Comparison of Parent and Child ROBVQ Verbal Bullying Responses

	Verbal Bullying Victims as identified by the ROBVQ (n= 30)	
	Not a Verbal Bullying Victim	Verbal Bullying Victim
Parent ROBVQ indicated verbal bullying victim	4 (13.33%)	2 (6.67%)
Parent ROBVQ indicated not a verbal bullying victim	24 (80%)	0 (0%)

Note. Verbal bullying includes being called names, teased, or made fun of.

Table 7

True and False Positive and Negative Rates: Comparison of Parent and Child ROBVQ Relational Bullying Responses

	Relational Bullying Victims as identified by the ROBVQ (n= 30)	
	Not a Relational Bullying Victim	Relational Bullying Victim
Parent ROBVQ indicated relational bullying victim	2 (6.67%)	1 (3.33%)
Parent ROBVQ indicated not a relational bullying victim	24 (80%)	3 (10%)

Note. Relational bullying includes intentionally excluded, left out, or ignored, or having lies spread about him or her.

Table 8

True and False Positive and Negative Rates: Comparison of Parent and Child ROBVQ Physical Bullying Responses

	Physical Bullying Victims as identified by the ROBVQ (<i>n</i> = 30)	
	Not a Physical Bullying Victim	Physical Bullying Victim
Parent ROBVQ indicated physical bullying victim	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Parent ROBVQ indicated not a physical bullying victim	27 (90%)	3 (10%)

Note. Physical bullying includes being hit, kicked, punched, or shoved.

Data Analyses

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that students and parents would have different perceptions of the frequency of bullying in school. The test failed to reveal a statistically significant difference in the mean amount of bullying reported by students ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 3.63$) and their parents ($M = 4.77$, $SD = 3.64$), $t(58) = 0.25$, $p = .80$, $\alpha = .05$.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that children of parents who were aware of the child's bullying status would report a greater sense of well-being. The test failed to reveal a statistically significant difference in the mean score on questions of well-being reported by students of parents who were aware ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.78$) and students of parents who were not aware of their child's bullying status ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.85$), $t(28) = 1.18$, $p = .25$, $\alpha = .05$.

A series of sensitivity and specificity analyses were conducted to determine the parents' accuracy in classifying their child as a bully, victim, bully-victim, or bystander (see Table 8). Sensitivity is defined as the true positive rate, or the number of people who will "test positive" on the test who actually have the condition being measured in real life. In this study, the child's

report on the ROBVQ was used as the “true” rate of bullying and victimization against which parents’ accuracy was judged. Specificity is defined as the true negative rate, or the number of people who will “test negative” on the test who do not have the condition being measured. Acceptable values vary depending on the use of the test. Tests with sensitivity and specificity values closest to 100% are the most clinically useful (Akobeng, 2006). For the purpose of this study, values above 70% were considered to be useful.

Analyses were conducted on the parents’ ability to correctly classify their child as a bully, victim, or bystander with a direct yes/no question. This method yielded 96.67% specificity but sensitivity could not be calculated because no children were classified as a bully by the ROBVQ. The question “Is your child a victim?” was 50% sensitive and 83.33% specific. Sensitivity and specificity analyses were also conducted using parts of the parent’s adapted version of the ROBVQ. The total score on the bullying classification questions were 33.33% sensitive and 83.33% specific.

A series of sensitivity and specificity analyses were also used to determine the relationship between type of bullying and parental awareness. ROBVQ questions for physical victimization only were 0% sensitive and 100% specific. ROBVQ questions for verbal victimization only were 100% sensitive and 85.71% specific. Finally, ROBVQ questions for relational victimization only were 25% sensitive and 92.30% specific. Confidence intervals, positive predictive power, and negative predictive power are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Sensitivity and Specificity

Measure	Sens. (95% CI)	Spec. (95% CI)	PPV	NPV
Y/N Bully	NA	0.97 (0.81-1)	0	1
Y/N Victim	0.5 (0.14-0.86)	0.83 (0.62-0.96)	0.43	0.87
ROBVQ Total	0.33 (0.06-0.39)	0.83 (0.62-0.95)	0.33	0.83
ROBVQ Physical	0 (0-0.69)	1 (0.84-1)	NA	0.9
ROBVQ Verbal	1 (0.20-1)	0.86 (0.66-0.95)	0.33	1
ROBVQ Relational	0.25 (0.01-0.78)	0.92 (0.73-0.99)	0.33	0.89

Note. PPV= Positive predictive value, NPV= Negative predictive value.

Discussion

Prevalence and Agreement in Parent and Child Reports of Bullying: Objective 1

The first objective of this study was to determine the relationship between parents' and children's perceptions of the frequency of bullying in schools. It was hypothesized that parents and children would have different perceptions on the frequency of bullying in schools. There was not a significant difference in the amount and frequency of bullying reported by the parents and children in this study, meaning that the two groups reported approximately the same amount of bullying behaviors occurring in the school. This is different from previous studies which indicate that parents tend to underestimate the amount of bullying in which their child is involved (Fekkes, et al., 2005; Glew et al., 2008; Matsunaga, 2009; Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002). In this study, both groups reported victimization rates similar to the national average (20% of children in this study were identified as a victim, whereas the rates reported nationally are 10-30%; Bowes et al., 2009). It is important to note that although parents and children both reported approximately the same level of victimization (20%), the same parent-child pairs did not all agree. Only two parents correctly identified their child as a victim

(meaning that of the six children who were classified as a victim on the ROBVQ, only two of their parents correctly identified their child as a victim). The same was true when parents were asked outright if their child was a victim. Only two parents correctly identified their child as a victim by this method. Interestingly, only one parent was correct using both methods of identification. None of the children or the parents in this study identified any of the children in the study as a bully by the criteria on the ROBVQ (although one parent identified his/her child as a bully when asked directly). This is significantly lower than the national self-reported average of bullies, which is approximately 30% (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007).

Despite the fact that most of the parent-child pairs did not report the same frequency of bullying, there seemed to be agreement between the groups as a whole regarding how much the children were victimized in school. There are several potential reasons why there was not a significant difference between parents' and children's report of victimization in this study. One potential reason for the agreement among the parent and child groups in victimization was that parents who were interested in participating in the study were already aware and interested in the prevalence of bullying in their child's school. Although not many parents reported contacting the school about bullying, it is possible that the parents in this study talked to other parents about bullying. This would lead to a general awareness of the frequency of bullying in school. The parents' awareness of the school as a whole may have led them to correctly estimate the prevalence of victimization in their child's school.

Another possible reason that the parent-child pairs in this study reported the same frequency of victimization is that the children underreported their experience of victimization and the parents underestimated the prevalence of victimization. It is important to note that at the school where the majority of participants attended, a speaker came to the school to speak with

parents about bullying approximately 6 months prior to the study. The speaker discussed what bullying is and what parents can do about it. It is possible that this event may have motivated parents to either underreport out of pressure to align with the school effort to decrease bullying, or to over report in order to help identify and correct an issue that was impressed on them. The children did not attend the event but may have heard about it from parents and teachers. Regardless, the participants in the study likely had an increased awareness of bullying.

Some estimates of peer victimization in schools are as high as 60% (Card & Hodges, 2008), so the participants in this study may have underreported and underestimated victimization that is actually much more prevalent. Glew et al. (2008) found that 27% of victims and 30% of bully-victims who participated in their study had never reported their victimization to anyone. Children may be motivated to underreport their own victimization due to the embarrassment of being a victim. They may see victims as different from the majority peer group or as having a social skill deficit and do not want to be seen differently (Hopkins et al., 2013; Stockdale et al., 2002). Girls in particular may be prone to underreport, as much of the bullying they receive is from other girls they view as their friends (Elledge et al., 2010). Further, Kochenderfer-Ladd (2004) found that “a direct pathway emerged from peer victimization to cognitive distancing suggesting that children, regardless of what emotional response is evoked, are motivated to either pretend that their peers had not targeted them for aggression or to try to ignore it” (p. 344). This suggests that children might not even realize when they are bullied, either due to their relationship with the bully or due to their tendency to ignore it. Another possibility is that victims have a pessimistic view of reporting and do not think it will help to report bullying. Card and Hodges (2008) found that victims may believe that the bullying will increase if they report it. Further, Goodman et al. (2010) suggested that children are not likely to report victimization if

they feel unsupported and lack coping resources. Thus, it is possible that the children in this study underreported their experience of bullying due to their perception of what it means to be bullied and what it would mean to report it.

Neither the children nor the parents in this study identified any of the children as a bully according to the ROBVQ. There are several possible reasons why there was no difference among the amount of perpetrated bullying reported by the parents and children in this study, and there was no identified bully. One possible reason is that the children truly did not bully others and their parents were aware of the fact that their child does not bully others. The parents and schools who chose to participate in this study may have the characteristics associated with a decreased level of bullying—warmth, interest, involvement, limits, monitoring, and non-hostility (Haynie et al., 2001). Idsoe et al. (2008) found that parental regulation and supervision had a significant effect on the amount of bullying perpetrated by children. Therefore, it is possible that the parents who chose to participate in this study are those that provide more supervision and thus, allow for less bullying. Bullies also report lower attachment to school and more truancy (Lovegrove et al., 2012) which would make them less likely to participate in a study done at their school. Thus, the parents and children in this study may have characteristics that made them less likely to bully and more likely to participate in a school-wide research study.

Another possible reason that there were no reported bullies in this study is that the children and parents were both reluctant to admit to bullying behaviors. It is estimated that as many as 20% of children are involved in bullying other children and that children in most studies underreport their own involvement (Cooper & Nickerson, 2013). There is a stigma associated with bullying and children may fear the consequences of admitting their bullying behaviors. A positive climate in a school may actually decrease the self-report of bullying due to the greater

pressure to maintain the positive climate and save face for the school. If the schools in this study have a positive climate that allowed for participation in this project, that climate may also make parents and children have a stronger fear of admitting bullying behaviors.

There may also be a lack of awareness among parents and children of how to identify bullying in school. It is possible that the children who chose to participate in this study were not aware that their actions could be classified as bullying. Vaillancourt et al. (2008) found that children who were not given a definition of bullying reported lower rates of bullying than children who were given a definition. The participants in this study were given a definition of bullying, but it is possible that they did not read it closely in an effort to finish the survey faster.

Finally, characteristics of the schools that participated in this study may have had an impact on the parents' ability to correctly estimate the overall prevalence of bullying in the school. It is possible that the general climate of the schools in the study allowed for greater communication between parents and teachers at the school. The climate of the school includes perceived warmth and connectivity, so parents at a school with a positive climate may be more likely to be involved or informed about what happens at school (Blumenfeld & Cooper, 2010). Another factor is the general school policy regarding the notification of parents in the event that bullying is observed or reported. The schools that participated in this study might have a reporting system that allowed for a greater level of parental awareness regarding bullying.

Bullying Roles and Agreement in Parent and Child Reports of Bullying: Objective 2

The second objective of this study was to determine how accurately are parents able to classify their child(ren) in each of the bullying roles (bully, victim, bully-victim, bystander). It was hypothesized that parents would be most accurate in identifying their child's bullying status when the child was a victim. In this study there were only victims and bystanders (no children

were identified as a bully or bully-victim). When parents were asked outright if their child was a victim (by a yes/no question), parents were only moderately able to correctly identify the child as a victim. They were generally accurate when the child was not a victim. This is consistent with research by Shetgiri, Lin, and Flores (2013) that demonstrated that communication between parents and children was associated with decreased likelihood of bullying over time. It is likely that increased communication leads to increased awareness, which could then be a protective factor for bullying.

Parents in this study were less accurate in identifying their child as a victim on the ROBVQ. This is likely due to the cutoff used on the ROBVQ (bullying must occur 2-3 times a month or more). Many parents identified that their child had been bullied once or twice—an underestimation of what the child reported. Thus, most of the parents were not completely unaware of the child's experience of bullying, they simply underestimated it. This fits with research by Matsunaga (2009) and Goodman et al (2010) that indicated that parents reported less exposure to violence and victimization than the children reported. Matsunaga (2009) found that families with an avoidant communication style were the most likely to have discrepancies in bullying reports. Conversely, families with an open-affectionate communication style had the smallest number of discrepancies. These variations in family communication styles may explain the range of discrepancies between parents and children in this study.

Child Well-Being and Agreement in Parent and Child Reports of Bullying: Objective 3

The third objective of this study was to determine the relationship between parents' ability to correctly identify their child(ren)'s bullying role and their child's self-reported well-being. It was hypothesized that children of parents who were accurate in identifying their child's bullying status would report greater levels of well-being than children of parents who were not

accurate in identifying their child's bullying status. There was no significant difference in well-being between children whose parent was aware and children whose parent was not aware of their role in bullying. Most of the children in the study reported feeling satisfied with life, believing their life is close to ideal, and being happy with the way their lives are turning out (with the average answer to these questions falling between Agree and Strongly Agree). This is likely due to the fact that there were so few victims identified in the study. Further, only 2 parents were aware of their child's victimization, producing very small cell sizes. The small overall sample size, coupled with the low rates of reported bullying behaviors, severely limited the analysis of parental awareness and well-being.

More research is needed to determine whether or not parental awareness of bullying is related to the child's well-being. Because parental support is such an important factor in child disclosure of bullying (Goodman et al., 2010) and is associated with buffering children from the effects of bullying (Beran, 2008; Bilsky et al., 2013; Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Espelage et al., 2008; Espelage & Swearer, 2008; Heck et al., 2011; Matsunaga, 2009; Poteat et al., 2011; Stadler et al., 2010), research in this area is imperative.

Types of Bullying and Agreement in Parent and Child Reports of Bullying: Objective 4

The fourth objective of this study was to determine the relationship between the type of victimization used and parents' awareness of their child's bullying status. It was hypothesized that parents would be better able to identify physical bullying than verbal bullying. Three types of bullying met the ROBVQ cutoff in this study—physical (e.g., hitting), verbal (e.g., name-calling), and relational (e.g., leaving others out or spreading rumors). Parents of children who reported experiencing verbal bullying (i.e., being called names) were aware that their child had experienced name-calling. However, only one-fourth of the parents of children who experienced

relational bullying were aware of their child's experience. None of the parents whose child experienced physical bullying were aware of the victimization. This is opposite of what was hypothesized—it was expected that parents of children who were physically bullied would be the most aware. However, it is consistent with one study in which parents reported a lower level of concern about physical bullying, possibly due to the lower frequency of physical bullying (Cooper & Nickerson, 2013).

One possible reason that parents in this study were less aware of physical bullying than verbal bullying is that the stigma of victimization is greater with physical bullying, which may lead to lower rates of reporting by children to their parents. Children in elementary and middle school may be more likely to make their parents aware of name-calling or threats because it is perceived as a more typical experience at that age. Bullies may also be more likely to engage in verbal bullying than physical bullying in the presence of adults, leading adults to witness more verbal bullying than physical bullying.

Summary

There were several surprising findings in this study. It was expected that parents and children would have different perceptions of the frequency of bullying in schools, parents would be most accurate in identifying victims, parental awareness would be associated with a greater sense of the child's well-being, and parents would be most accurate in identifying verbal bullying. Instead, parents as a group in this study reported the same amount of victimization as the children in the study. However, an analysis of the individual parent-child dyads revealed that parents underestimated their child's experience of victimization. Surprisingly, there were no identified bullies in this study. Further, there was no difference in the reported well-being of children whose parents were accurate or parents who were not accurate in identifying their

child's role in bullying. Finally, the parents in this study were most accurate in identifying when their child experienced verbal bullying. The parents were significantly less accurate in identifying relational bullying, and no parents were accurate in identifying when their child experienced physical bullying. These findings add to the literature that suggests that parents tend to underestimate their child's experience of bullying, and have more concern about verbal bullying than physical bullying (likely due to the greater prevalence of verbal bullying). However, more research is needed on the relationship between parental awareness of bullying and child well-being.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study. First, there are several possible confounding variables that were not controlled. For example, the sample included participants from various school sizes, family sizes, races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses. Although the principal investigator reported some of these demographic variables, the data were not analyzed in a way that explained the effect of each of these variables. Race is a particularly important factor in the reporting of and response to bullying behaviors. The sample in this study was limited; the majority of participants identified as Caucasian and several races were not represented. The questionnaires were translated into Spanish in an effort to reach a more diverse sample. However, it was determined that the meaning of the content would substantially change based on the way in which bullying was described. Therefore, the Spanish translation was not used in the study. The age range of the children in the study was also limited; 76.67% of the children were between 8-10 years old. A greater range of children (within the targeted 8-16 range) would likely provide a greater diversity of bullying experiences.

Another limitation was that the sample size was relatively small, which limited the statistical power of the study. Researchers in other studies, such as Matsunaga (2009), have been able to get much higher participant participation by targeting students of large universities with online surveys. Matsunaga (2009) sent students online surveys and had the students forward the surveys to their parents. In the current study the principal investigator originally attempted to control for the possibility of people outside of the target population taking the survey by being present during school-wide events. This was changed to allow for the school principal to determine the desired method for his or her school, which included sending the hard-copy surveys home to parents. Changing the method of survey distribution allowed a degree of control over who received the survey but did not control who took it. The choice between online surveys and hard-copy surveys represents a tradeoff of greater control and fewer participants, or less control and more participants. The investigator chose the option of having more control over survey distribution.

The greater level of control may have detracted from the perceived level of anonymity of the participant data, allowing for a response bias. Just as in the study by Matsunaga (2009), families were assigned a code to match their responses without the need for names on the survey. Nonetheless, the families turned the survey back into the administrator or the investigator at the schools. This may have contributed to the potential for a response bias in which participants underreported bullying behaviors in an effort to appear more desirable to the researcher or school.

Another potential aspect of the study that could contribute to underreporting bullying behavior is that the questionnaire was a self-report measure of recent behaviors. In other studies, researchers have found that participants report more bullying when asked about past bullying

behavior (Cooper & Nickerson, 2013; Gladstone et al., 2006). This is likely due to the fear of negative consequences from recent behavior. However, in order to assess the current prevalence of bullying to inform interventions for the current needs of children in schools, the principal investigator chose to assess current behavior.

There are likely characteristics about the schools that chose to participate in the study that limited the results. Twenty-six schools were asked to participate in the study and only three schools agreed to participate. There are several possible reasons why the remaining schools chose not to participate. Some schools never responded to the investigator's request. Of the schools that did respond, some indicated that they do not allow outside researchers in the school. Other schools had a lot of questions about what variables would be examined. The schools that ultimately participated were very open to the study from the beginning. The principals had direct and ongoing communication with the investigator and were interested in the topic of bullying. These characteristics are related to the concept of a positive school climate that was discussed in the previous section, and may have had an impact on the results.

Finally, the Parent Questionnaire used in this study had never been validated for parent report. The measure was adapted from an established child measure with good reliability and validity (ROBVQ; Olweus, 1996); however, it is not known whether or not the adapted parent measure ultimately had the same reliability and validity as the child measure. More research is needed to determine the utility, reliability, and validity of the Parent Questionnaire for use in bullying research. For that reason, the results of the parent measure should be interpreted with caution.

Implications and Future Directions

Despite these limitations, outcomes from this study indicate that parents are generally aware of the presence of bullying in these schools. Parents were also the most accurate in identifying their child as a victim when the type of bullying experienced was verbal. It is important that researchers continue to study the factors related to parental awareness of bullying and the relationship with child well-being. An awareness of these relationships could be instrumental in developing effective interventions for bullying in school. It is important that researchers determine how factors such as stigma, fear of retaliation, and communication styles impact child disclosure and parent awareness.

It would be beneficial for future research to obtain a more representative sample to have a more accurate depiction of bullying and parental accuracy. This includes gathering a larger sample with greater diversity in race, ethnicity, and child age. An effort should be made to translate the questionnaires in a way that maintains the integrity of the survey while being able to access the growing Spanish-speaking population. Researchers should survey students and their parents from schools that have students in the full age range of the ROBVQ (8-16). Online administration may aid in getting a larger sample.

The greater challenge for future research is determining methods to access schools with a negative climate and parents of known bullies who may be less open to research on this topic. The nature of a negative school climate is that there is a lack of communication, or that the existing communication is negative. This makes it difficult for researchers to access school communities with a negative climate. However, these schools would likely allow for an analysis of more bullying behaviors and a greater range in the students' sense of well-being. Similarly, parents of known bullies may be hard to engage because of characteristics discussed previously

(e.g., the tendency to be low in warmth, rejecting, and withdrawn; Bowes et al., 2009; Olweus, 1996; Perren & Hornung, 2005; Shetgiri, Lin, & Flores, 2013). Researchers should attempt to engage all families of a school in order to gain a better understanding of the full range of parent perceptions and bullying experienced by students in school.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined parental awareness of bullying in schools as related to child well-being and the type of bullying children experience. There was no significant difference among the rates of bullying reported by the children and parents in this study. Further, there was not a significant difference in reported well-being among children whose parents were aware and children whose parents were not aware of the child's experience of bullying. No bullies or bully-victims were identified in the study. Parents were generally able to identify when their child was a victim, but underestimated the child's experience of bullying. They were most likely to identify their child's experience correctly when their child experienced verbal bullying. The parents in this study did not identify the children who experienced physical bullying.

Several limitations and implications were identified. In general, the small sample size and survey method limited the analysis due to the narrow range of bullying experience reported by the participants. However, this research highlights the importance of parental awareness as a necessary link in bullying interventions. Preliminary evidence suggests that the type of bullying experienced by the child may be a factor in parental awareness of bullying in schools. Future researchers should continue to examine how parental awareness of bullying affects children in order to develop effective interventions for the child and the family.

Although several findings in this study were not significant, further research on parental perceptions of bullying is essential for the development of effective interventions. More research is needed to determine the relationship between parental awareness of bullying behavior and child well-being. Large-scale studies would be useful to help determine how parental awareness is related to each of the bullying roles and bullying types. It would be beneficial to determine the relationships among awareness of bullying, type of bullying, parental support, and child well-being in order to instruct parents on the importance and approach to talking to their children about bullying. Parental awareness is a crucial link in stopping the cycle of bullying. Sawyer et al. (2011) found that parents' understanding of bullying affects their response to their child's disclosure of bullying, and Kochenderfer-Ladd (2004) found that parental response to bullying disclosure affects the child's coping strategy. Future interventions should target parents as a vital part of the development, maintenance, and end of bullying behaviors.

This study adds to the growing body of literature regarding bullying in schools, youth roles, and parental awareness. The study provides an initial step towards understanding the relationships between child and parental perceptions of bullying. Overall, bullying is an important and valuable topic for intense study as it affects numerous youth worldwide and has both immediate and longstanding implications for children's adjustment. Research that involves youth, schools, and their families is essential to combat the problem of ongoing, pervasive bullying in today's society.

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Appendix A
Parent Demographic Questionnaire

Please choose the response that best represents your opinion. If you have more than one child between the ages of 8 and 16 years old in this school, please only answer for the one child who is also filling out the survey. Please answer all of the questions. Thank you!

Demographics

1. Your gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Other

2. Your race/ethnicity (check all that apply):

- ☐ African American
- ☐ American Indian/Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino

3. Marital status:

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

4. How many children do you have?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more

5. How many people live in your home at least 6 months of the year?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more

Appendix B
Child Demographic Questionnaire

Please choose the response that best represents your opinion. Please answer all of the questions. Your answers are confidential and will not be shared with anyone. Thank you!

Demographics

1. Age: _____
2. Grade level: _____
3. Your gender:
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
 - ☐ Transgender
 - ☐ Other
4. Your race/ethnicity (check all that apply):
 - ☐ African American
 - ☐ American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - ☐ Asian
 - ☐ Caucasian
 - ☐ Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 - ☐ Hispanic/Latino
5. How many siblings do you have?
 - ☐ 1
 - ☐ 2
 - ☐ 3
 - ☐ 4
 - ☐ 5 or more
6. How many people live in your home at least 6 months of the year?
 - ☐ 1
 - ☐ 2
 - ☐ 3
 - ☐ 4
 - ☐ 5 or more